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University sign shop dedicated to quality



University Sign Shop assistant supervisor Matthew Carpenter explains how letters were cut out of a piece of plastic in order to make a sign. On any given day, the University Sign Shop is processing 2 to 10 work orders for the university.

[Photo Credit: Charlie Pearce](#) | Daily Texan Staff

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In a small metal building on the outskirts of campus, a large format printer with ink cartridges protruding from its side like machine gun clips meticulously prints a 30-foot-long burnt orange banner. The mixed smell of adhesive, ink and paper wafts throughout the building's weathered walls, giant wooden tables and sheet metal shear.

It is in this compact space that assistant supervisor Matthew Carpenter and his team of two operate the University Sign Shop — a service offered by Project Management and Construction Services that provides full-color signs, banners and graphics for University-related use.

Carpenter left his illustration and graphic design studies at a Manhattan design school to seek work. When he moved to Austin, Carpenter landed a job at the University Sign Shop through his pastor, who worked at University Construction Services full time. Carpenter has been working for the University for 18 years.

“I kind of stumbled into the job,” Carpenter said. “Though it might not have been exactly what I had planned on doing, the job had an artistic angle to it. There were enough design and creative aspects of the job that I thought I could come here and do something good and make a difference.”

Giant “Texas Fight” banners from Saturday’s OU game all bearing tiny black streaks are hung on the walls, serving as a reminder that quality control is one of the main focuses of the shop. Carpenter said there are more than 40 years of design experience between him and his staff, and that each project they work on is treated with a laser-focused attention to detail.

“We are all highly critical of the work we do and the quality of the finished product,” Carpenter said.

For the skilled team, the job isn’t as hard as it is busy. The shop is currently overseeing 60 work orders, including a series of painted wood renderings of the Tower showing energy savings at various University buildings. Carpenter said fulfilling all of the orders to the standards they demand of themselves can be difficult with their limited staff.

“At times, it can be difficult due to our small facility and manpower, but we try our damndest and put a lot of heart into what we do because we know the projects are important to our clients,” Carpenter said.

In the past, the shop has facilitated many designs and banners for the athletics department, numerous colleges in the University and even had a hand in designing the look of UTPD’s squad cars.

The shop also helped create designs for University Health Services, said Joshua Cook, assistant director for Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

In December, their office will be relocated to a larger space within the facilities building. Landscape Services will move into the shop’s former space.

“The plan at this time is to have some part of Landscape Services occupy the current location [of the sign shop],” said Laurie Lentz, business and financial services communications manager. “There may be modifications to the building but [there are] no current plans to reconstruct the building.”